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ABSTRACT

Programs for the continuing education of adults are often fragmented by the structural division of higher education. If extension education is to prosper, it should be centrally administered. This could enhance the student experience by: (1) providing complete information on educational services; (2) establishing a broader learning community; and (3) permitting the extended use of mass media. nnification could also reduce unnecessary competition among programs and add strength to the movement toward lifelong learning. (EMH)

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OPEN LEARNING AND ADULT EDUCATION

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There are many different educational agencies which deal with the continuing education of adults. Within a single university there may be several different offices which offer outreach programs. For example, the telephone book of a midwest university shows offices for

- Adult Education Programs
- Agricultural Extension Service
- Area Health Education Office
- Continuing Education and Extension

The Division of Continuing Education and Extension has many different departments. These apparently act almost completely independently. The overall impression is that there is no tendency to cooperate and unify the contributions of each office. I have encountered similar situations in other universities. The point is that if the agencies which offer education to adults continue to be fragmented, an open university effort will not succeed. It will continue to operate below critical mass; it will continue to be a fringe on the massive higher education system. Kenneth Kaygood (Smith, 1970) comments,

> "With a few noteworthy exceptions, adult education has sprung up like a weed in the university rather than being planted there purposefully as a part of the garden. Once there, it often has been treated as a weed given little nurture or concern though admired for its vitality."

If this attitude was ever appropriate, it is inappropriate now. The need is for a unified, collaborative effort which is national in scope.

The open university or extended university is often perceived as qualitatively different and separate from efforts such as continuing education and extension. The people who have worked so hard for so long with so little support or attention are legitimately enraged at the idea that the lifelong

learning concept is something new. Often they have been arguing for years for the resources to develop and use new technologies such as open broadcast television, radio, etc. As a case in point, one of the leading groups in using the mass media is the Department of Extension at the University of San Diego.

The fact that people seem to discover the open university concept as something new tells me that efforts such as extension, independent study, and correspondence study have an image problem. The people in society who think about such matters often do not perceive each of the above long standing efforts as a strong foundation upon which to build new outreach efforts. They do not see the open university concept as bringing together a variety of pre-existing efforts into a new more powerful outreach organization. Each kind of effort (weekend colleges, evening classes, extension, correspondence, etc.) should appear as points along a continuum of open learning alternatives.

We can find evidence of the neglect of long standing programs when we reach books such as The Expanded Campus, Dyckman, W. Vermilye, ed., Lifelong Learners -- A New Clientele for Higher Education, Vermilye, ed., the Handbook of Adult Education, Smith, Aker, and Kidd, eds., Public Broadcasting and Education, The External Degree, by Cyril O. Houle, Diversity by Design, and Planning Non-Traditional Programs, by K. Patricia Cross, John R. Valley and Associates.

Each approach has something important to contribute to the ideal of lifelong learning -- something which is unique and important. Further each contributes an alternative which cannot easily be replaced by the other

approaches. e.g. The correspondence or independent study effort offers some students an access to education which cannot be replaced by a weekend college or an extension class.

Therefore, as indicated above it is the thesis of my talk that we should find some way to unite all of these outreach efforts into a program which is much stronger than the result of independent programs. The resulting program would be stronger in three ways: From the student point of view it would offer a one-stop supermarket of education which would offer a close match between what he needs and what is available. From the organizational standpoint a unified effort would decrease competition if recruitment of a student into any program resulted in increased health for all elements. From the political point of view we might have the strength to get the level of resources which I believe we need in order to meet the needs of lifelong learning in the last quarter of this century.

Student View. From the standpoint of the student, the present fragmented system often fails to supply the services he needs. Stephen Bailey (Bailey, 1972) states the case a little bit more strongly than I would, but his words are worth hearing.

> "Without adequate counseling, and without adequate educational and psychological support systems, students will pay matriculation fees and then discover that learning by nontraditional methods is hard and often baffling work. Enormous expectations will be initially established followed by the thud of mass attrition....Without very special devices

to overcome these psychological propensities, flexible space-time programs can founder on the quicksand of unstable human motivation."

According to my reading and experience the student needs the following three services: 1. A more comprehensive information system which matches him with the educational programs which are most appropriate for him or her. The information system should send the student to the best organization or program for that student's purposes. i.e. The information system should be able to tell the student that a proprietary school is best for him (her), that registering for an extension course will serve him best, that enrolling in a distant correspondence school is a good solution for an educational problem, that applying and enrolling at an ivy league campus would be best, that working through a Learning Exchange would supply the skill needed at the lowest cost, etc. I am trying to emphasize that it would be nice if a single trusted place could be the source of information about educational alternatives which were available to everyone. This trusted place should also be able to assist the student in applying to a chosen institution or program and assist the student in organizing a financial package. If other services are needed (peer tutoring, day care, application for financial assistance, jobs, etc.) these should also be either supplied or guided by the information center.

2. Local learning communities. It is difficult to make good educational choices without information and without some help in discussing the information which is available. It is apparently difficult or unpleasant (Kansas survey) for people to learn in isolation. Isolated

study is given a low preference rating and tends to have a high rate of student attrition.

Therefore, a unified system of lifelong learning should have a network of people who reach out to the students, a network of students who reach out to each other, a network of opportunities for the student to make presentations to local groups such as historical societies, civic groups, clubs, public school classes, etc.

Network of Learning-Information Centers. Many of our institutions have the space for learning-information centers. Libraries, schools, agricultural extension offices, large semi-public institutions (e.g. banks), churches, YM&WCAs, union halls, etc. In addition, mobile learning-information centers can reach even the home-bound (handicapped, aged, mother with small children). An interconnected outreach system could assure that the lifelong learning could have a home base and a network of learning homes away-from-home. This would give the system an image of solidity and scope which would, in my judgment, enhance the entire lifelong learning movement.

3. Mass Media. There is some evidence from open university programs that is important to the adult non-campus student (for reasons which I don't fully understand) to have some instructional material presented via the mass media (newspapers, magazines, radio, television). There seem to be positive motivational and pacing effects. These effects may occur even when the student does not use the mass media either because of unavailability or time pressure. Further, I would hypothesize that the use of the identical materials in the home would not have the same effects.

The mass media have a variety of other important effects for the lifelong learning movement. They attract a large non-enrolled audience

if skillfully done. The materials thus have the potential power to teach people who simply want to learn without acquiring credentials and without involving themselves with the expensive red-tape of the educational bureaucracy. If people do in fact learn from the mass-media, and people, including the research staff at UMA are beginning to study this question; the mass-media may provide extremely cost-effective learning -- a bargain for society and for the individuals.

The mass media also have the power to motivate people toward greater formal involvement with education. This can take place as a result of general consciousness raising with respect to further educational possibilities, as a result of focused interest in a particular course or subject, as a result of success with reading and attending to broadcasts. This is suggested by data from Dr. Luskin of Coastline Community College (Luskin, 1976). If the bits of evidence are born out by studies we should find the following effects of the use of the mass media:

a. A flow of information and ideas to the general public that reads or watches or listens to the materials.

b. The attrition rate of students in teaching-at-a-distance programs should be lessened. This is suggested by not yet published data from studies of the University of California at San Diego and the following data from the University of Mid-America. In Table 1, the percentages should be read as follows: In the offering of the Fall of 1974 52% of the students who initially registered

for credit successfully completed the course. This percentage fell to 38% with the third offering in the Fall of 1975. In the Spring of 1976 the course was offered for the first time without the open broadcast television component. (However, the students could watch the programs on videocassette in the learning centers.) It should be noted that although students may continue to take the exams which will enable them to complete the course it is doubtful that the percentage for the non-broadcast offering will approach 38%. This tentative piece of evidence needs to be confirmed by more careful study of the effect of the broadcast component.

Table 1

Fall, 1975 Open broadcast	Spring, 1975 Open broadcast	Fall, 1975 Open broadcast	Spring, 1976 Non-broadcast
A	A	A	A
52%	45%	38%	9%

A - % of original registrants for credit who have completed course

c. There should be increased involvement of adults with many different educational programs including (and in particular) on-campus programs. This possibility is supported by the evidence from Luskin (Luskin, 1976) and the experience of the TV College of the Chicago City Colleges. The Chicago people report that most of the people who start with a TV course complete a program on one of the two year campuses. The typical anecdote tells of an older individual who has been out of school for several

years and is too shy to risk failure in a classroom. Once they gain confidence in their academic ability, they are willing to meet the challenge of the classroom.

The last point is especially important. Many colleges fear that a truly powerful outreach program will drain students away from the campus. According to what little evidence we have and according to my understanding of the forces involved, use of the mass media in higher education will result in significantly increased on-campus enrollment. In fact, this seems reasonable that effective use of the media should act as a powerful advertisement for higher education.

Organizational Viewpoint. In a zero sum game the gain of one player is always at the expense of another. In poker what I win must be lost by another player. In a non-zero sum game cooperation can result in gains for all. As (I believe) Winston Churchill said, "A rising tide lifts all the ships." At present the adult education game is being played pretty much as a zero sum game. People fear that a success in recruitment of one program is a threat to another. In fact this is probably not the case and our organization and budgeting system should reflect this.

If we collaborate, we can pool our resources to produce better teaching-at-a-distance courses which each of us can use. For example, four midwest states and UMA have contributed funds to develop a course on pesticide application which all can use and which can also be leased to other pesticide education programs.

If we collaborate, we can supply services to each student which fragmented programs cannot supply.

Political Force. Most of all, if we can find some way to greater unity and work together, our combined voice could gain the attention of

legislators, policy makers and decision makers at all levels. We could assure the future development of adult teaching-at-a-distance with the resources needed to break out of our higher education ghetto.

For example, it has always seemed anomalous to me that frequently a forty year old student who attends on campus gets an educational subsidy of about two dollars of tax funds for every dollar he or she spends, while a student enrolled in extension or correspondence in the same institution gets no subsidy and must learn under a more difficult regime. To remedy an injustice like this should be relatively straightforward if one has the right political foundation. Our inability to get minimum consideration of our case is another piece of evidence that we need to organize for greater strength.

In summary, there is enough substance and strength in the diverse groups which are concerned with continuing, lifelong, recurrent, adult, extension, correspondence, non-traditional, weekend, night class, learning exchange education. To capitalize on this potential strength we must have a larger vision of what we can do. We must collaborate where possible, and unify where feasible. The unity does not imply a national college. The idea of unity does require greater consolidation within each college which has outreach programs and it does require greater consolidation and collaboration among schools in political action, in developing systems for serving students, and in developing and sharing courses for teaching-at-a-distance. Only if we can work together effectively, can open learning bring people the ideas and skills they will need to deal with the challenge of the future.

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